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ABSTRACT

The Comprehensive Special Education Project (COSEP) is described as involving Indian Youth Advocates and Indian Youth Resource People trained to act as liaisons between Indian families and the schools in Northeastern Minnesota where COSEP goals are to: identify out of school Indian youth and arrange special in-school or out-of-school services for these youth; identify in-school Indian youth and assist in determining their special learning needs, arranging special education services, changing special education services when inappropriate, and providing a positive Indian identity; work with Indian parents in the formation and operation of parent committees; and provide information dissemination re: educational and vocational options for in- and out-of-school Indian Youth. Evaluating COSEP's three years of operation, this document presents tabular data describing: identified out-of-school, school age Indian youth (high, low, and average incidence school districts and number of youth receiving professional contact and assistance); in-school Indian youth identified via Title IV-A participation; Indian youth receiving special education services, Title I services, and other special services; frequency of special academic help for Indian students; intervention involvement by advocates with Indian students who have special learning needs; Title IV-A parent committees; and identified Indian senior high school students. The importance and success of this project are described by project personnel via annecdotal accounts. (JC)

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NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS
IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA

Comprehensive Special Education Project

C O S E P

Third Year Report

1977

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Virginia, Minnesota

Introduction: The Need and the Notion

Appropriate educational services for Native American students has been a long-recognized need, particulary in some school districts in Minnesota. In these districts data has been kept that indicates that there is frequently a lower success rate in school systems which serve Native American students in grades K-12. Extensive parental and community involvement in these districts, through school boards and parent committees in particular, have defined this need to the point that few people intimately involved can dispute its presence.

In Northeastern Minnesota, in 1974-75, special programs designed to assist Native American students existed in the Duluth area, in the Nett Lake-Orr area, in the Leech Lake areas, and in a few isolated school districts within the triangle (See Map Appendix 5). Most of the school districts in this region, however, were not actively engaged in efforts to provide for special learning needs of Native American students as a cultural group, thus prompting descriptions of this area as "the No-Man's Land of Indian Education." The paramount question was, how many Native American students were attending or had attended and dropped out in these districts. Related to this question were other questions: Who are these students? How are they doing in school? Are school officials aware of special funding sources (particularly Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act)? Are parents aware? Are school officials interested and willing to apply for and administer these funds? Are parents interested and willing to advocate for this service and serve in advisory capacity regarding the administration of special programs?

How adequately are Native American students presently being served through existing traditional and special education channels?

The motivation to find answers to these questions and ultimately to encourage new special services where needed, came from individuals experienced with special learning needs of Native American students in Minnesota. Leaders in the Duluth office of the Indian Education Section and education leaders in Nett Lake, in collaboration with area leaders in Special Education and Title I, established a precedence by melding Title I money and special education money to institute a combination data-gathering and service-providing program for Native American students in the area. This project was entitled "COSEP", Comprehensive Special Education Project.

COSEP was planned for a three year life span, would be administered by Nett Lake School, but would work in 19 school districts:

Grand Rapids
Coleraine
Nashwauk-Keewatin
Hibbing
Chisholm
Buhl
Mt. Iron
Virginia
Aurora-Hoyt Lakes
Babbitt
Ely
Tower-Soudan
Cook (St. Louis County)
International Falls
South Koochiching
Biwabik
Gilbert
Eveleth
Littlefork

Nett Lake School was chosen as fiscal and administrative agent for a number of reasons. First, the school, located on the Boise Forte Indian Reservation, in the village of Nett Lake, is an Indian school serving Indian children in an all Indian community, and is controlled by a locally-elected Indian school board. This makes Independent School District #707 (Nett Lake) unique in the area. The school board and key staff of the school were acutely aware of the unique educational needs of Indian students, and were receptive to the possibility that Indian students in nearby areas

were experiencing similiar difficulties. Further, family and reservation ties were already known to exist between people in Nett Lake and Native American families in some Range communities. In addition, the school board and superintendent, Virgil Wurr, were familiar with special funding programs for Native American students; particularly Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act. They had established credibility with the planned funding sources, Special Education and Title I, as well as with prime backers of the project in the Indian Education Section of the State Department of Education.

Finally, the size of the district presented a unique advantage. The relatively uncomplicated administrative and fiscal structure of the district would allow more flexibility and freedom for the COSEP staff, while at the same time, allowing a higher degree of involvement by the school board in monitoring the project. In short, COSEP would become a project for Indian people, run by Indian people. Credibility of this sort was deemed crucial to the ultimate success of the project.

Funding for COSEP presented a serious challenge to the resourcefulness of the planners. While both Title I and Special Education funds were pledged, each of these funding sources carry restrictions that made launching the project more than a simple matter of hiring staff. A regulation on the amount of Title I money a district can receive per fiscal year limited the amount available to COSEP to $18,000.00 per year. Special education funds were to be delivered to Nett Lake in the form of state reimbursement of a percentage of employee salaries, with COSEP staff to be considered as reimbursable. Unfortunately, this money would arrive in Nett Lake nearly one year late, and would

strain the financial reserves of Nett Lake School in the interim.

The solution to this difficult problem came from administrators of C.E.T.A. (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), a Federal employement program handled for this area by the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, in Virginia, Minnesota. Five CETA positions were designated for Nett Lake School, with the restriction that the individuals hired qualify under CETA guidelines. Reimbursement of salaries and fringe were 100% and were made monthly to Nett Lake School. Special Education Reimbursement, earned during this time, could now be used in the second year, of the project, and COSEP had at last become a reality. It is safe to say that CETA provided the final impetus which saw COSEP leave the planner's page to take form and substance at last.

I. Goals and Objectives

A. Initial Goals

Initial goals were broad-based, for no one knew just exactly what would be found in the project area. Below is a summary, condensed from an early proposal of COSEP.

1. Needs Assessment
   a. Determine numbers of Indian students in attendance in each district.
   b. Determine numbers of Indian students receiving inappropriate educational services.
2. Advocacy
   a. Provide advocacy for Indian students needing special help and/or receiving inappropriate services.
   b. Encourage development of new services.
3. Parent Involvement
   a. Establish dialogue with parents of Indian children, and serve as a communications bridge between these parents and school officials.
   b. Develop Title IV-A Indian Parent Committees
4. Activities

Six staff persons were hired, the first week of February, 1975; four were designated Native American Youth Advocates, one was entitled Education Consultant, and one was the Program Manager, In addition, Virgil Wurr, Supt. of Nett Lake School, was designated Project Director. Each advocate was assigned a geographic part of the project area; numbers of

Indian students (according to Title IV-A counts) were approximately equal in each part. Major administrative responsibility was given to the Program Manager, while the Educational Consultant was expected to be "roving helper" to the advocates, expecially in establishing contact with the school districts.

The first five months of the project were to be spent conducting a "needs assessment". Unfortunately, this approach led to a number of problems, and in retrospect was not an appropriate way to begin COSEP. First, the needs to be assessed were unclear. Stating something as a need involves a value judgment. What is one man's pleasure may be another man's poison. In other words, what appears as a needed service by one person may be deemed inappropriate or unnecessary by another, and the needs of a particular student can be defined differently by the advocate, the parent, the school official, and the student himself.

Determining numbers of Indian students in attendance was relatively simple, even though the definition of an Indian student is necessarily vague. However, determining who was receiving inappropriate services involved making value judgments on the efforts of those already providing services, and few people will accept with open arms unrequested criticism on a sensitive issue by people of unproven credibility. This was precisely the reason why a needs assessment could not be successfully conducted by COSEP staff in the first few months.

A method evolved, however, from this early learning experience for COSEP staff. Credibility had to be established first, through development of working relationships, first with parents and students, and then with school officials. Only when parents had gained a sense of trust in the advocate, were they willing to serve on a parent committee or call upon an

advocate in a time of need. Similarly, school officials became willing to share information, involve the advocate in crisis situations and decision making, and trust the advocate's judgment, only after they began to feel the advocate was really there to help them, and could help them. Credibility of this type can come only by repeated contact, by sensitive listening, by resourcefulness, and by honest, professional dependability. Development of this credibility became the real goal of the first months, and ultimately opened the way for achievement of the other goals.

B. Revised and Present Project Goals:

1. Out of School Indian Youth:
   a. Identify out of school/school age Indian youth.
   b. Attempt to arrange special services within the school for these Indian young people.
   c. Attempt to arrange services alternative to the traditional school setting for out of school Indian youth.
2. In school Indian Youth:
   a. Identify all Indian youth attending school.
   b. Assist in determining the special learning needs of these young people.
   c. Assist in arranging services for Indian youth who are not presently receiving special education services and who need them.
   d. Assist in changing special education services for Indian students, if present services are deemed inappropriate.
   e. Provide a source of positive Indian identity to all Indian students.

3. Parents of Indian students:

   a. Assist in organizing Parent Committees under Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act.

   b. Provide information to parents pertaining to the many facets of Indian Education.

   c. Provide training sessions to Indian parents pertaining to Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act.

   d. Assist parent committees in the planning and administration of the Title IV-A program.

4. Dissemination of Information:

   a. Provide information to Indian students and their parents pertaining to institutes of higher education (i.e. colleges and vocational schools).

   b. Provide information to Indian students pertaining to financial aid , and assist them in completing forms.

   c. Provide information to the Indian community pertaining to Indian cultural enrichment events.

II. Analysis and Implementation

With the evolution of new goals and directions from the original COSEP project a new structure of staff also evolved. The number of advocates was increased from four to five in the second year of the project, 1975-76, and the educational consultant position was eliminated. The duties of the educational consultant were assumed by the program manager. A cash grant was given to International Falls to be used in conjunction with local money to hire an advocate for that school district who would then be under local supervision and use COSEP in an advisory capacity. This was the first seed planted toward eventual local control of all of the Advocates.

The possibility of local support of an Indian Youth Advocate was enhanced by individuals in the Special Education Section of the State Department of Education. They consented to making four advocate positions reimbursable from special education funds through local school districts for school year 1976-77. These four positions were given to International Falls, Tower, Grand Rapids, and Coleraine, which were the COSEP area districts with the highest Indian populations. Special Education reimbursement was combined with Title IV-A money in each of these districts. Four people were hired, two of whom had already been employed as COSEP Advocates. These four were renamed Indian Youth Resource People to better fit Special Education terminology and standards.

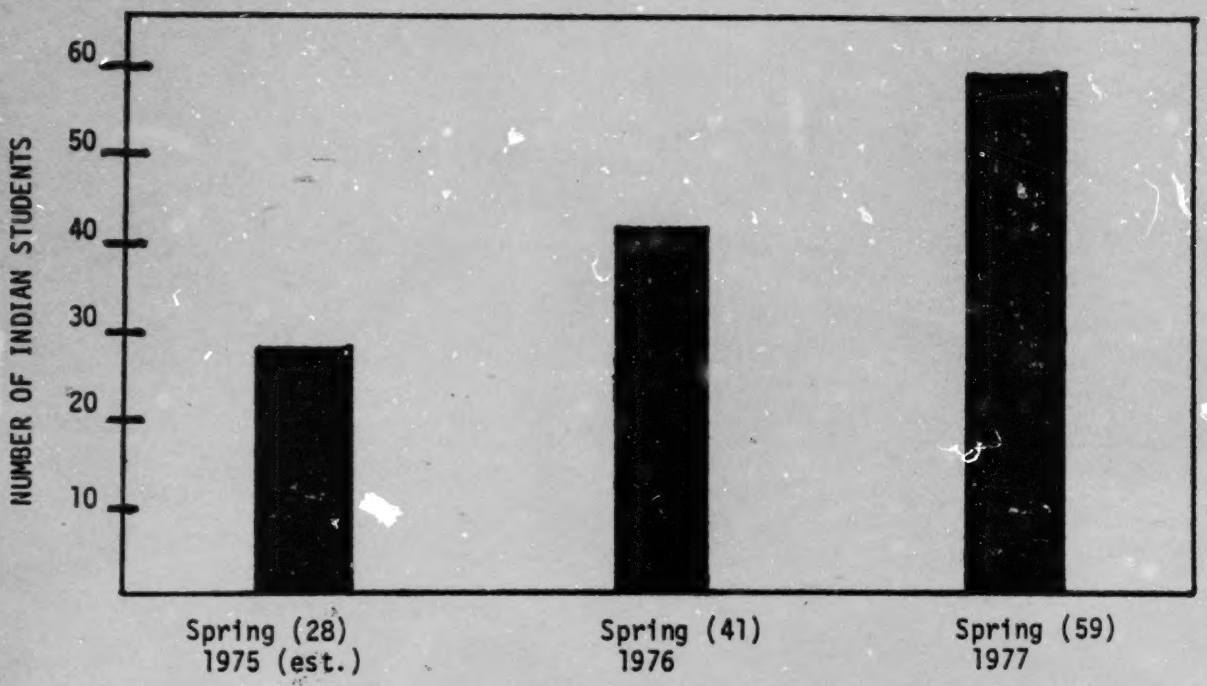
As the final project year draws to a close there are four Indian Youth Advocates, four Indian Youth Resource People, a Project Director and a Program Manager, all serving Indian young people, in an attempt to achieve the following goals.

A. Out of School Indian Youth:

Identifying Indian students who are living in a school district, are of school age, and have left school without finishing, is a difficult task. School records do not designate the ethnic origin of students who have dropped out; often, these students may have left the area, or may have gone on to other educational programs, with the assistance of another agency. Parents and friends do not often openly discuss the socially embarrassing "drop-out" status of a child or friend, and the student himself may be reluctant to re-establish contact with a school staff person.

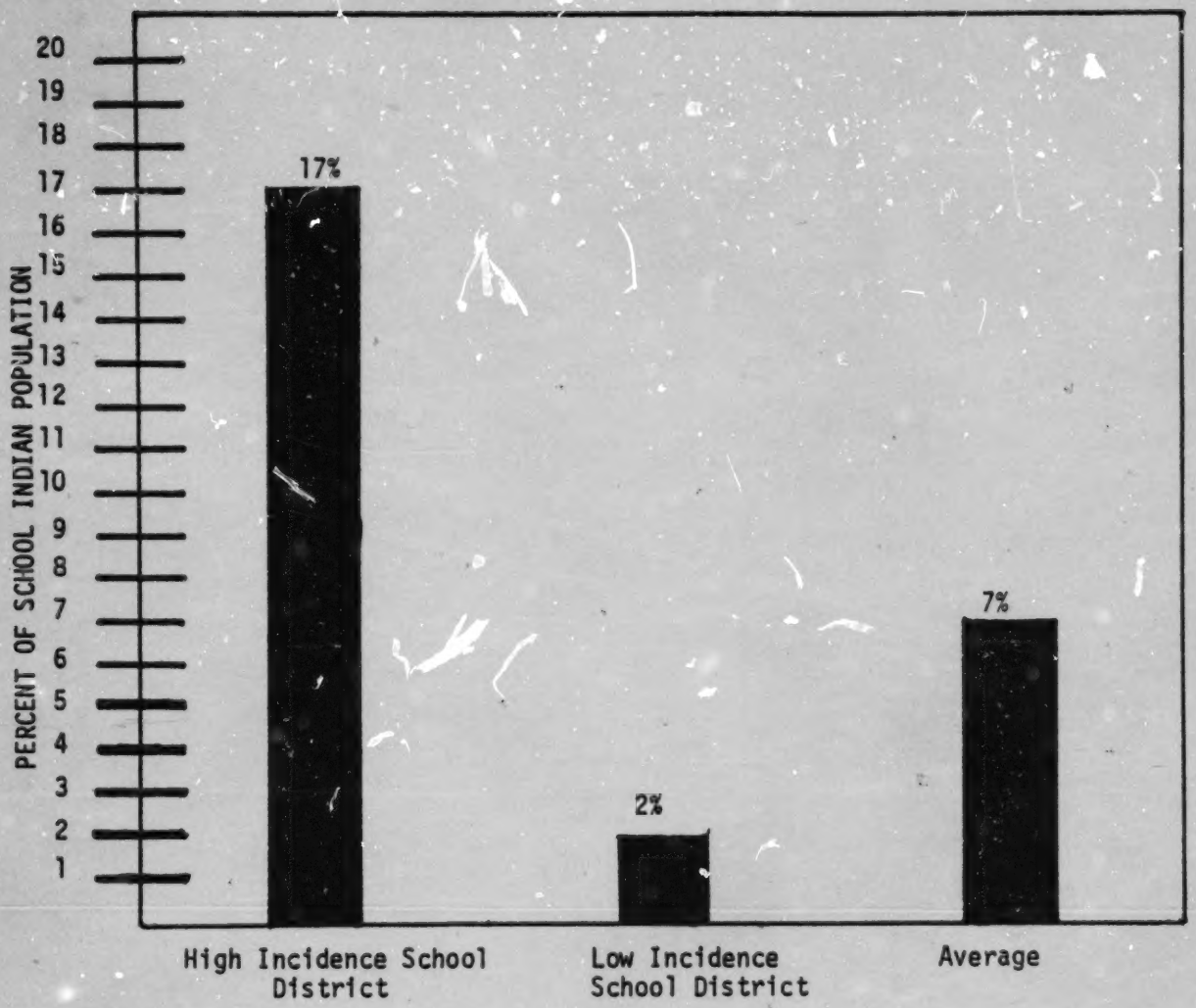
Table 1 (page 11) indicates totals of known out-of-school/ school age Indian youth in 13 of the COSEP area school districts. The fact that this number has risen each year reflects the increased familiarity of the advocate with Indian people in the area, and not necessarily an increasing incidence rate of drop-outs. Table 2 (page 12) is a comparison of Indian student drop-outs with the present Title IV-A Indian student counts (these are not drop-out rates.) The percentage of Indian students who do not finish school varies markedly, from one district to the next. While COSEP is active in sixteen districts, at present, three of these districts have no known out-of-school Indian youth. However, in a few districts, the majority of Indian students in attendance do not complete secondary school; this leads to a drop-out per student in attendance ratio in excess of 17%.

Table 1



IDENTIFIED OUT-OF-SCHOOL, SCHOOL AGE INDIAN YOUTH

Table 2



IDENTIFIED OUT-OF-SCHOOL, SCHOOL AGE INDIAN YOUTH

Assisting these students once they have been identified is an even greater challenge. Many of them have gone on to establish life-patterns without a high school diploma, taking jobs and/or starting a family. Most hold little desire to return to the high school setting, although some are anxious to obtain training that may make them more employable. Numbers, such as in Table 3 (page 14), show precious little of the efforts by the advocates. Needless to say, this sort of work must be maintained continuously; one cannot simply implement a program to "clean-up" the drop-out problem. Opportunities, circumstances, and most importantly, people, are always changing and what appeared unacceptable to a youth one year may become quite desirable the next.

Table 3

Number of out-of-school students:	1976	1977
Residing in 13 COSEP area districts:	41	59
Receiving Professional contact by Advocate*	30	53
Assisted back to High School	10	19
Assisted to take G.E.D.	7	13
Assisted to enter Vocational School	10	18
Assisted to enter College	7	[illegible]

IDENTIFIED OUT-OF-SCHOOL, SCHOOL AGE INDIAN YOUTH

*Advocates have counselled individually with the students, and have pursued alternatives when possible.

B. In School-Indian Youth

1. Identification

Customarily, Title IV-A Indian student counts are submitted, in Minnesota, to the Indian Education Section of the State Department of Education. They in turn submit the numbers to the Washington office for Title IV-A, where the size of each eligible grant is determined on a per capita basis. Superintendents must submit these numbers each fall. In the absence of special Indian education personnel, the information is often gathered by building principals. This can result in student counts far lower than those ascertained when an advocate or advocate-type person gathers the data personally, through home visits. Table 4: a-e (page 16 to 18) are tabulations of Title IV-A Indian student counts reflecting the influence of the COSEP advocate and other Indian educational personnel in identifying Indian youth.

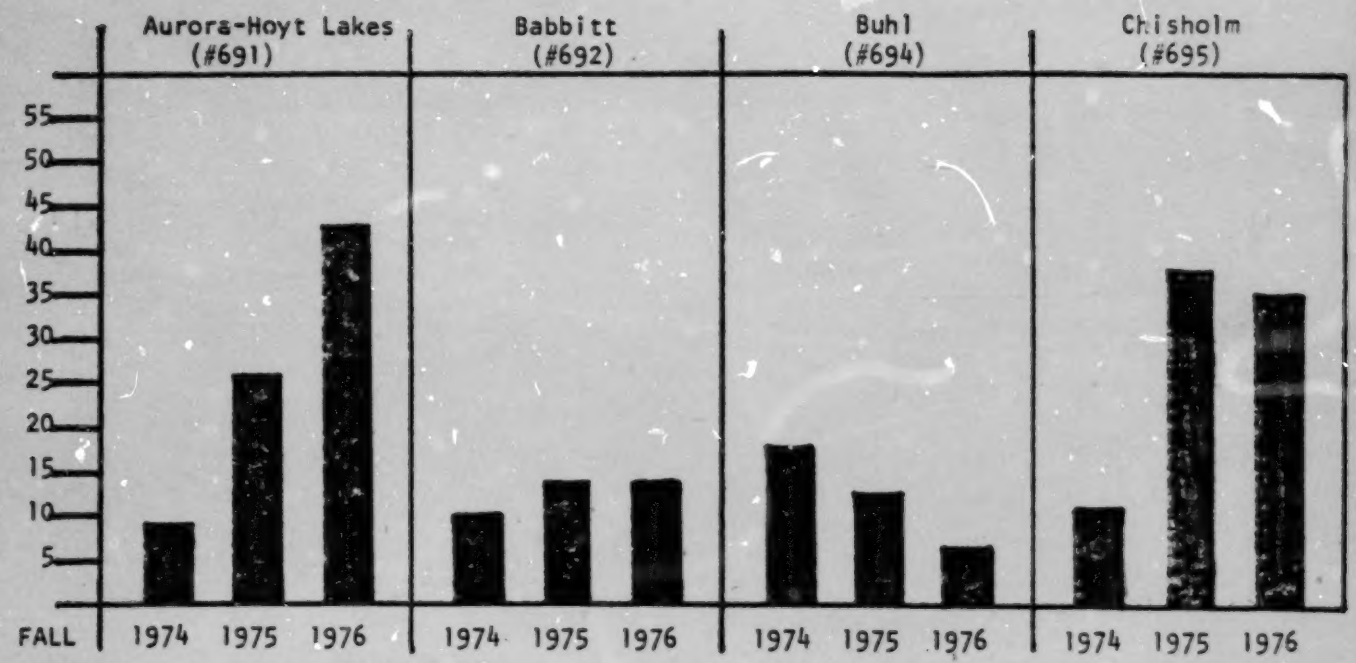
Counts went down in Buhl because families left the district, while Littlefork did not submit a count, due to parental desire not to form a parent committee. The count changed significantly in Coleraine, from 1975-1976, reflecting a different procedure in indentifying Indian youth, requiring a parental sign-off. Below are the total Indian student counts for the seventeen school districts for the three years of the project.

1974	466
1975	934
1976	925

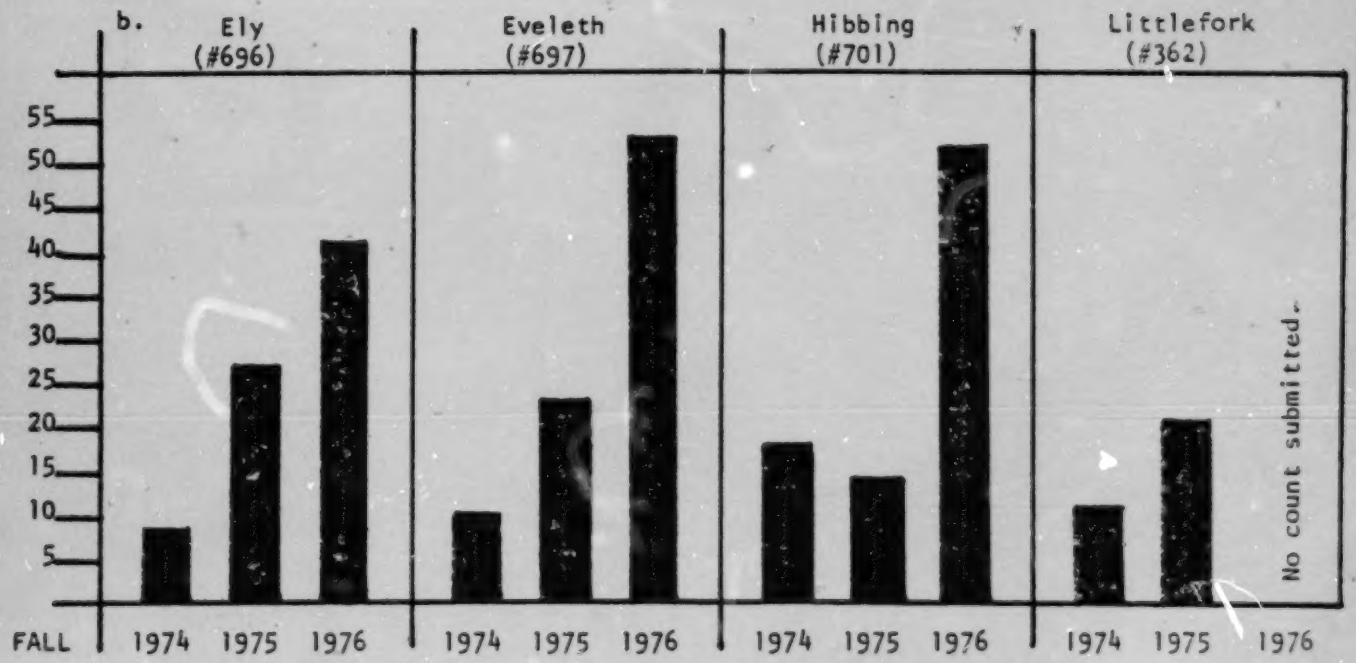
Once again, identification of Indian youth attending school is a continuous process: students graduate, move or drop-out, and Indian families become known, who were not previously known. Part of an advocate's job in

TABLE 4

a.



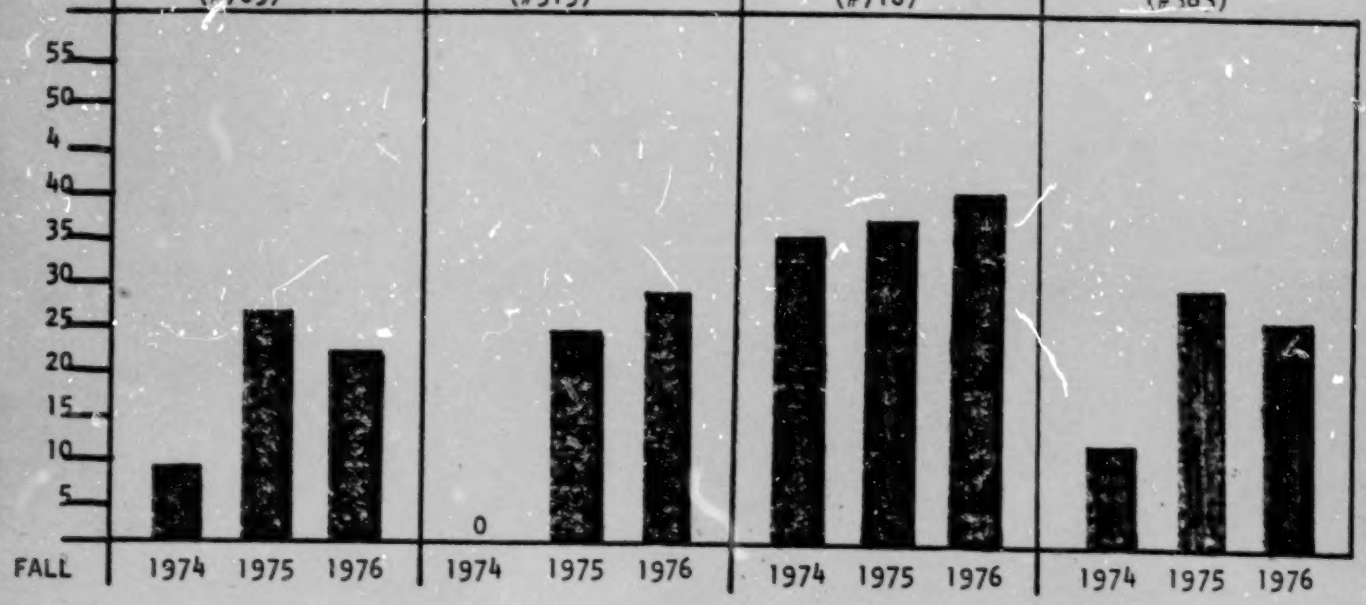
b.



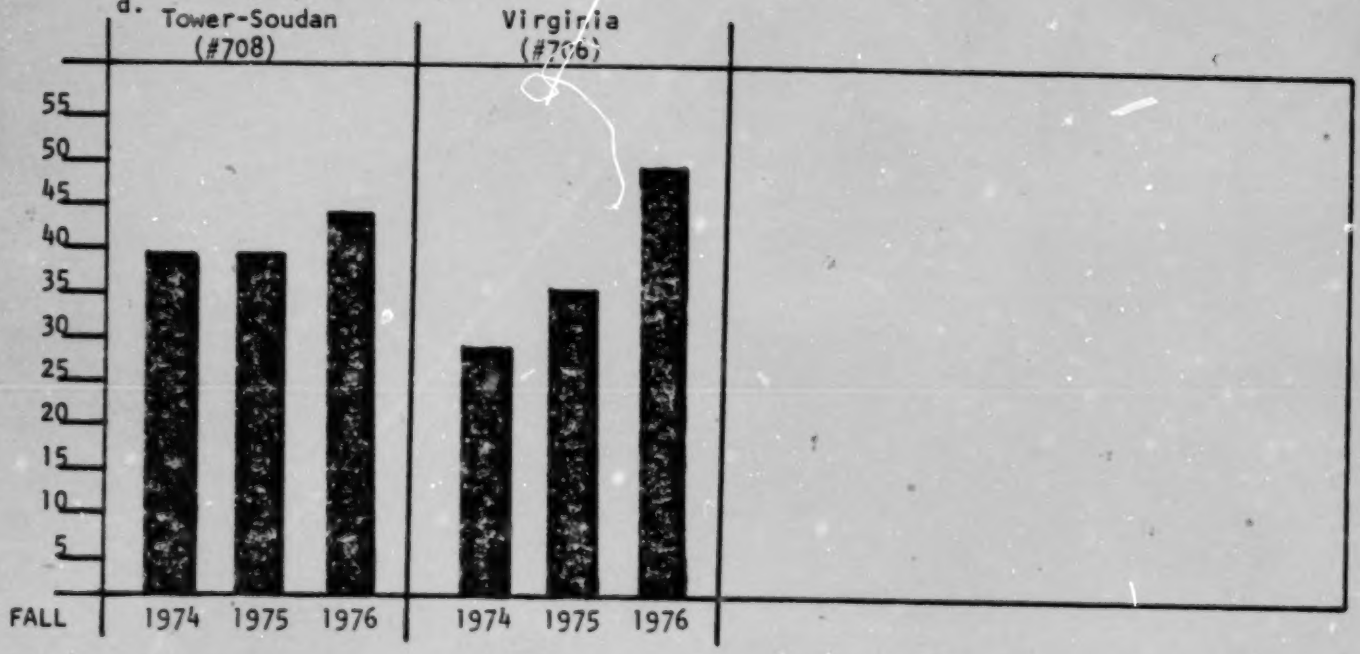
INDIAN STUDENT COUNTS--TITLE IV-A

TABLE 4 (cont'd.)

c. Mountain Iron (#703) | Nashwauk-Keewatin (#319) | Cook-Cherry-Alango (#710) | South Koochiching (#363)

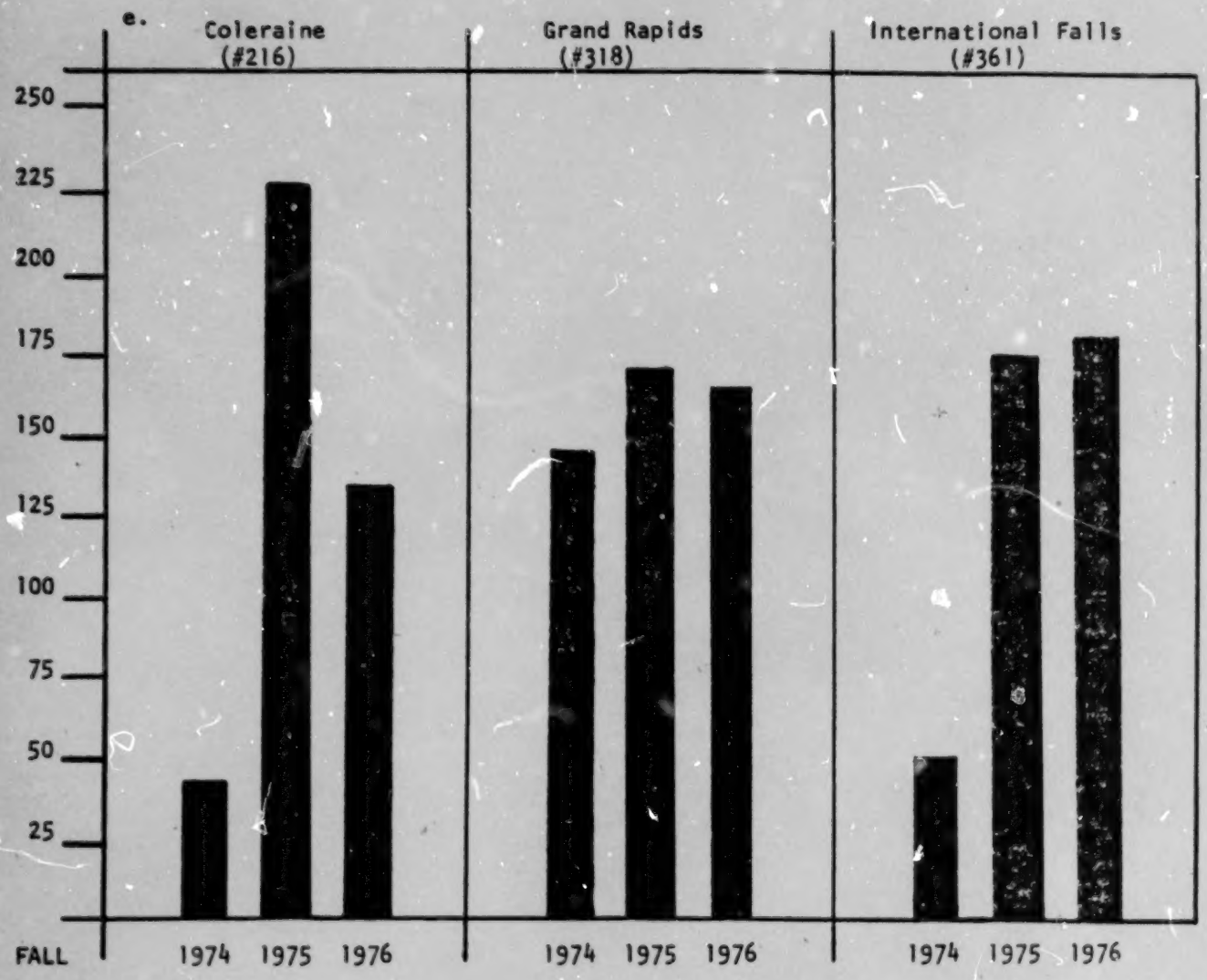


d. Tower-Soudan (#708) | Virginia (#706)



INDIAN STUDENT COUNTS--TITLE IV-A
(continued)

TABLE 4 (cont'd.)



INDIAN STUDENT COUNTS--TITLE IV-A
(continued)

many of these districts is to provide a focal point around which an Indian community can identify. Where this has not happened, Title IV-A programs have not flourished. In districts with an active Indian Advocate, Indian Resource Person or Indian Home-School Coordinator, Title IV programs have become an important asset to the school district.

2. Special Needs and Services

Most of the districts in the COSEP area are members of special education cooperatives and thus have child study systems in various stages of development. One district, South Koochiching, does not have the services of a special education director. Thus the procedure by which an Indian Advocate becomes involved in the assessing of needs and the ultimate delivery of services varies considerably from one district to the next. However, some principles hold true:

1. Every district has some established technique for identifying children with special needs.
2. Every district has at least one special academic program to assist these children, within the school.

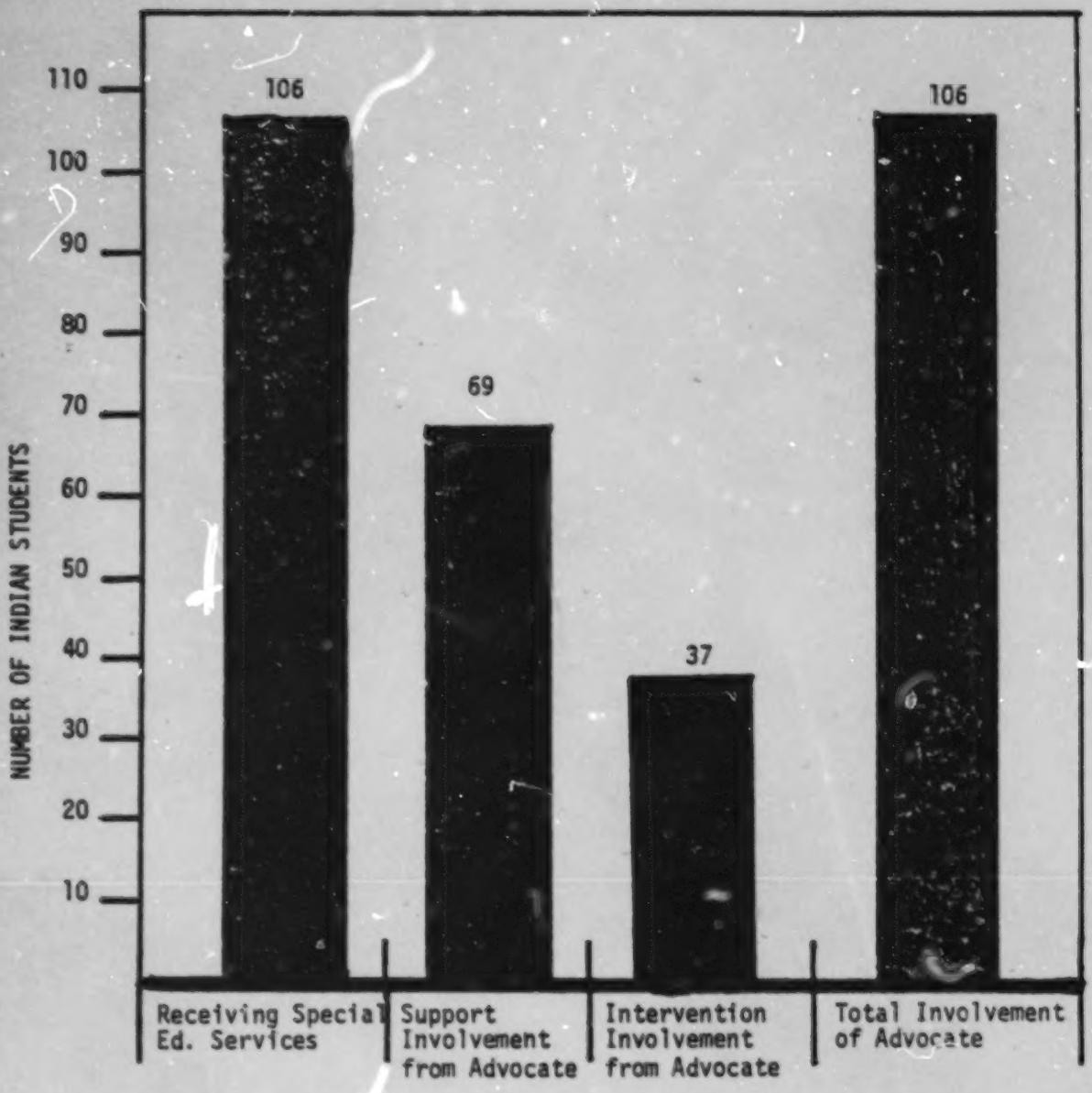
The effectiveness of the advocate for these particular students depends ultimately on his/her ability to work constructively within the existing system. This means the advocate must be knowledgeable of special education and Title I terminology, assessment, and referral techniques, as well as basic remediation methods, and must provide a useful service to those school staff ordinarily responsible for this. Oftentimes there can be overlap in an advocate's responsibility and a director of special education's responsibility. While most directors of special education want to provide the personal contact with homes and families that is necessary and required, administrative duties often

make this extremely difficult. An advocate is able to augment the director's role by helping to keep parents informed and involved, by drawing parents into necessary placement and evaluation staffing, and by alerting the director to new developments early. Unfortunately, where advocates fail to develop this credibility and working relationship with appropriate school staff, little effective representation for Indian students with special learning needs can be expected.

Tables 5-8 (pages 21 to 24) show numbers of Indian students receiving various forms of special academic help. Two types of involvement by the advocate with these students are defined: support and intervention. Support means that the advocate has monitored the students progress, and has maintained a friendly relationship with the student, but has not been involved in any program changes for the student. Intervention means that the advocate has been involved with the student, his parents, and school personnel in order to affect a program review or change or resolve an interpersonal relations dilemma. This can include conferring with the student, his parents, and his teachers, attendance at staffings and parent/teacher conferences, and arrangement for supplementary help not normally supplied by special education and Title I (such as Title IV-A tutoring, DVR programs, Johnson-O-Malley tutoring, part-time work and arrangement of special motivations.)

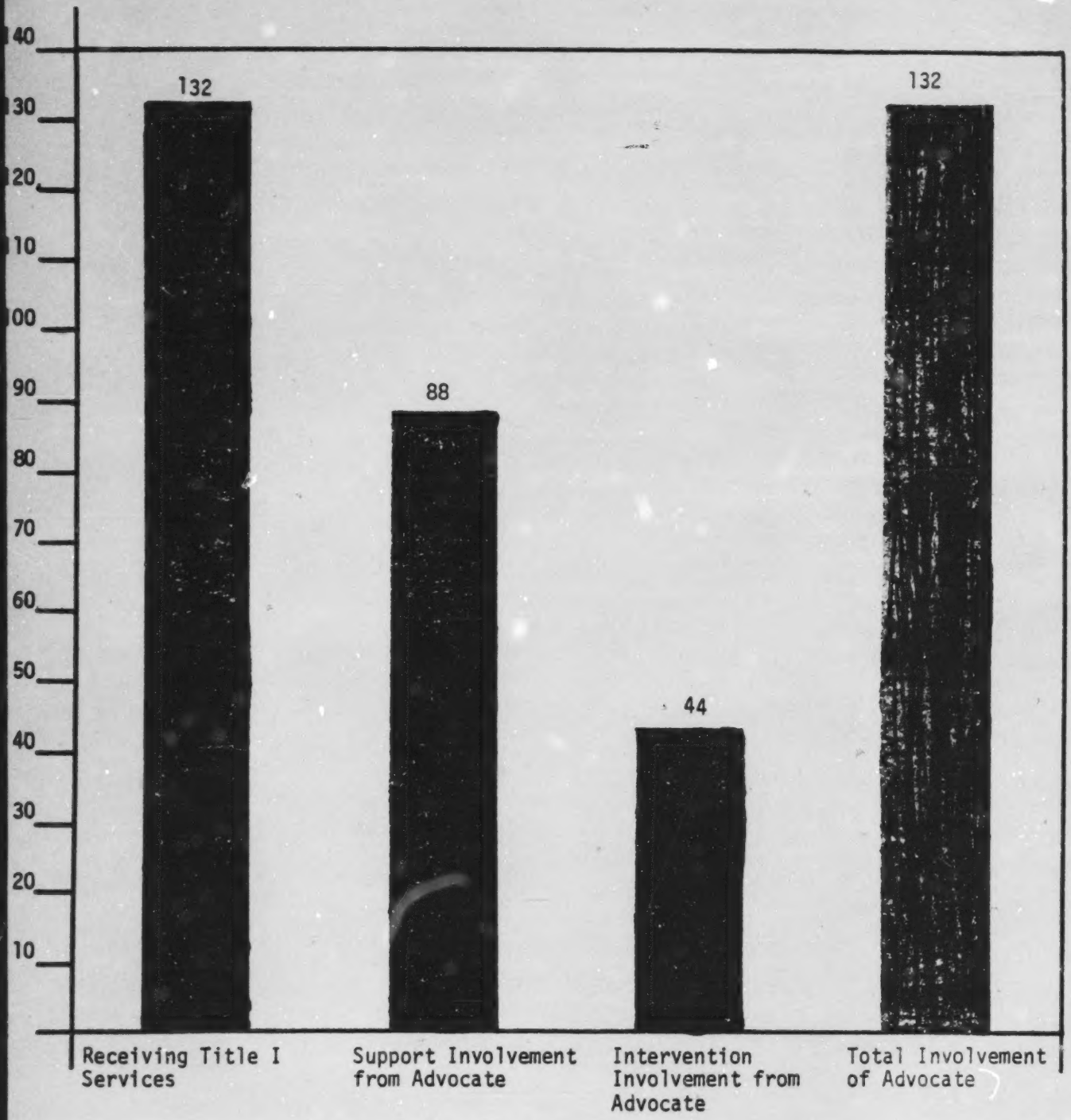
Several factors must be kept in mind when interpreting the data in Tables 5-8. First, tremendous differences exist among school districts regarding percentages of Indian students receiving various types of assistance. Reasons for these differences are many and varied. The degree of special services available varies considerably from one district to the

Table 5



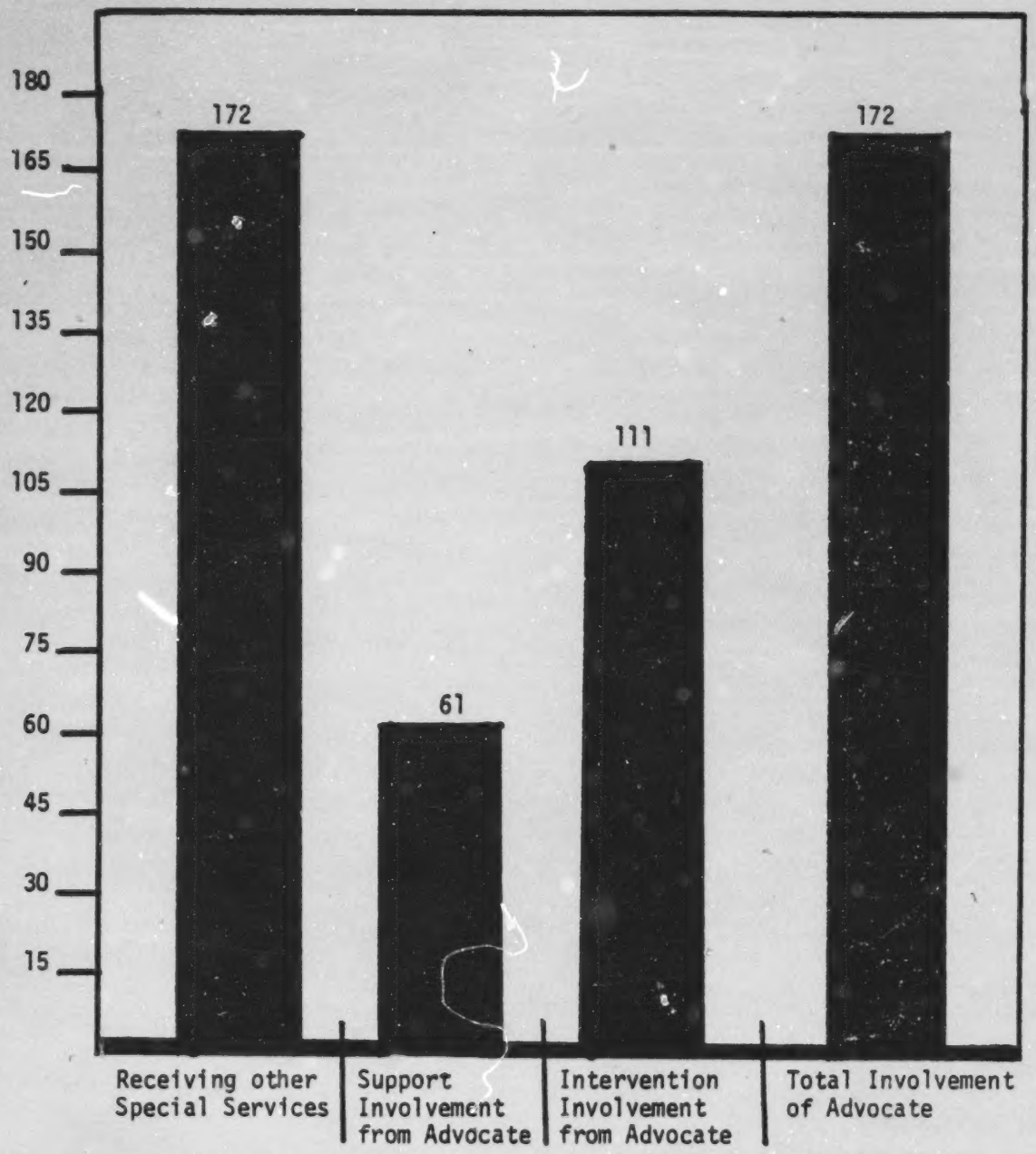
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Table 6



TITLE I SERVICES

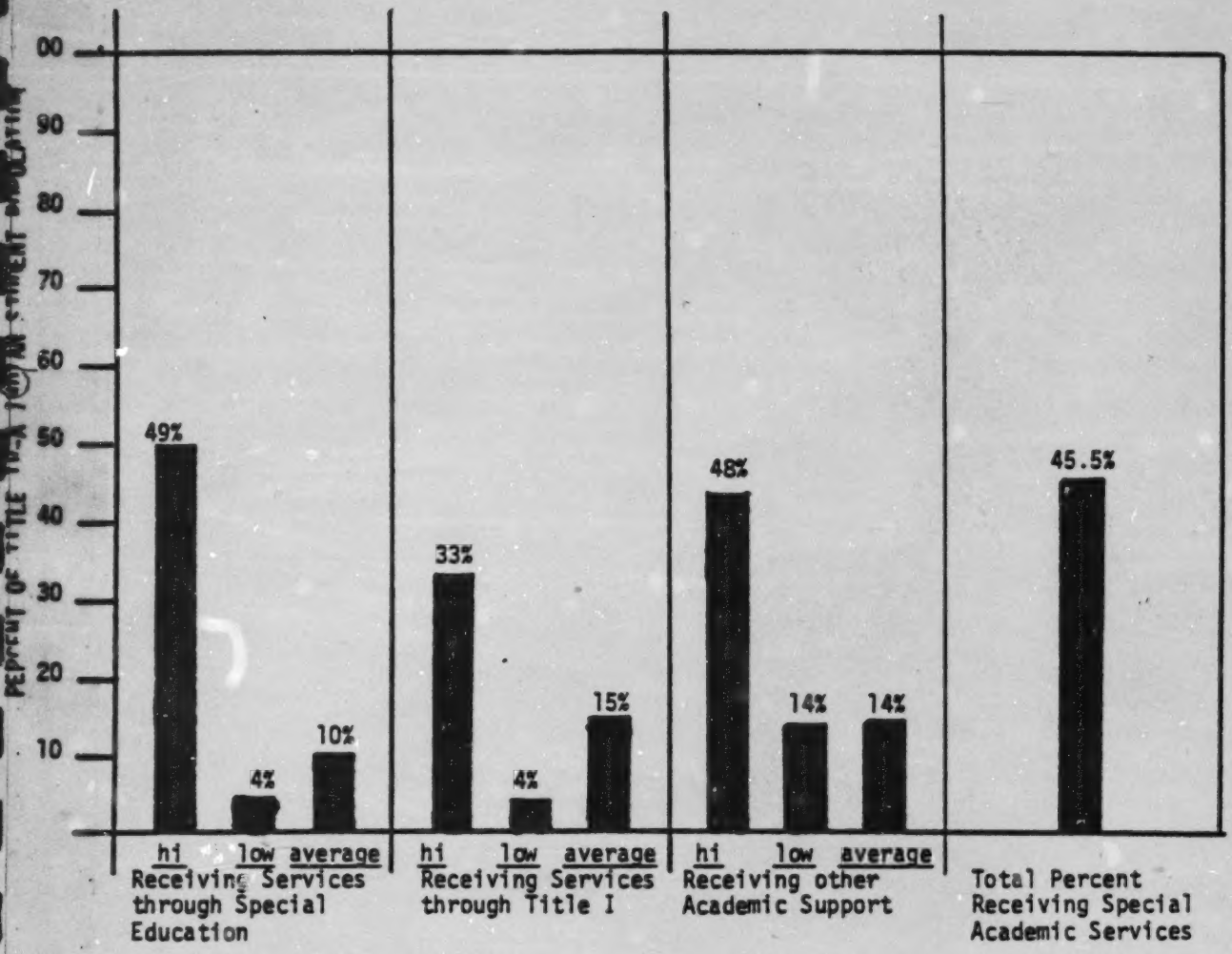
Table 7



OTHER SPECIAL SERVICES FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

(i.e. J.O.M. Tutors, Title IV-A Tutors)

Table 8



FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL ACADEMIC HELP FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

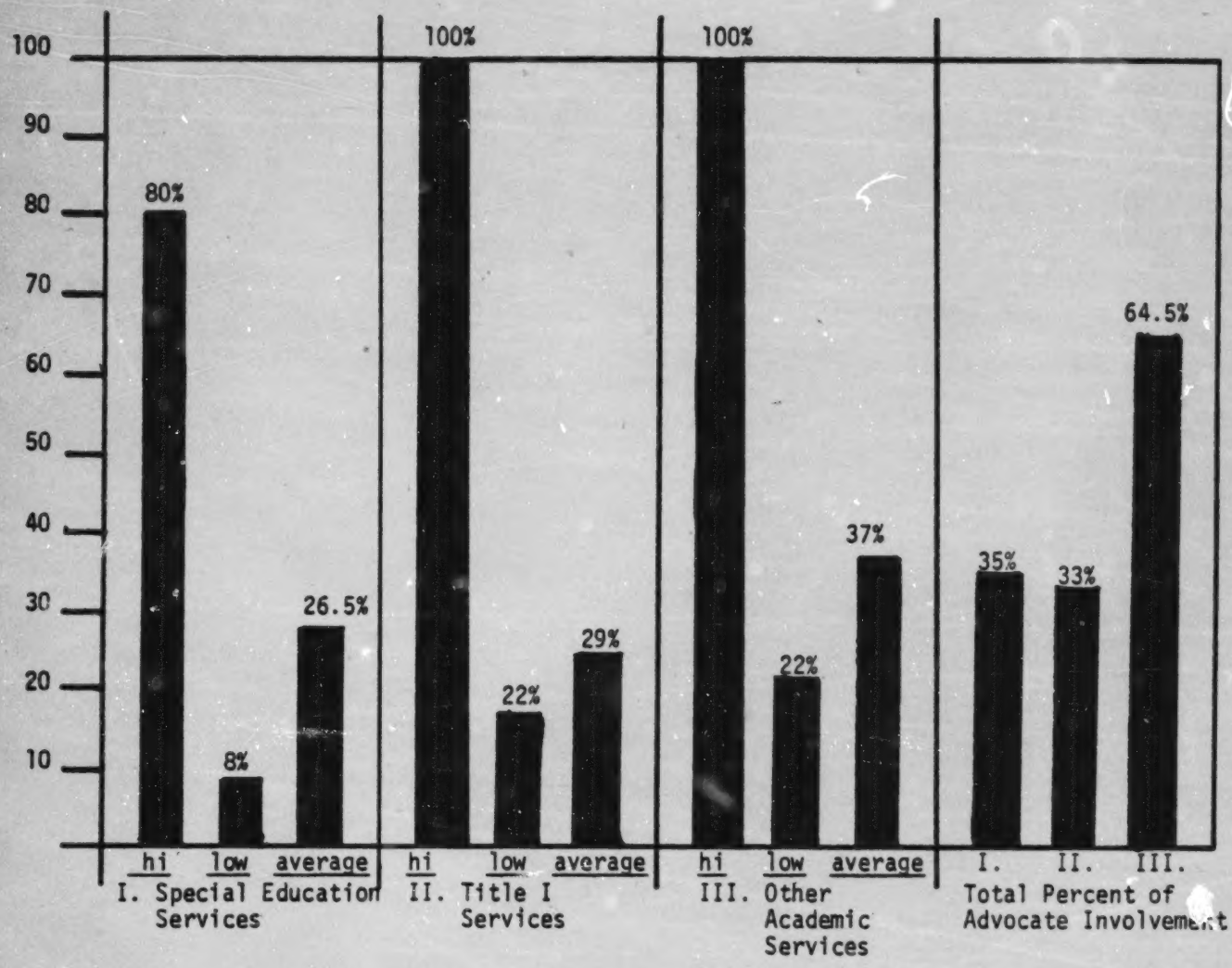
next. Only a few have Johnson-O'Malley programs or special tutoring programs through Title IV-A. Thus, the degree of service available varies considerably and not necessarily in direct proportion to need.

Second, the nature of the Indian communities in each district varies. In some districts the Indian community is a close-knit cultural group of its own; patterns of achievement and difficulty in school become reinforced many times over, by peer pressure and by attitudes of school staff and parents, with the result that many more Indian students need special education or other related help. In other districts the Indian community is more diverse and is not so much a cultural entity of its own. In these districts the factors mentioned above do not exert as strong an influence on student achievement.

A third factor to keep in mind is that tremendous differences exist among the districts, regarding the level of involvement of the advocate with these students. Table 9 (page 26) will illustrate this.

Some advocates in some districts have achieved high levels of involvement and have become integral parts of districts' efforts to serve children with special needs, while in other districts this involvement is at best superficial. Differences both in the attitudes and techniques of the advocate and the openness of school staff to this type of help give rise to the wide variation in involvement of advocates. This is not to say that level of involvement is an automatic measure of the success of an advocate; success may take a little longer in one place than in another. As in any difficult task, some people are more effectively suited for the work than others; this can result

Table 9



INTERVENTION INVOLVEMENT BY ADVOCATE WITH INDIAN STUDENTS

WHO HAVE SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS

in vastly different results from one district to the next.

In working with Indian students who have special learning needs, as in identifying Indian students and working with those who have dropped out of school, the need for an advocate does not necessarily diminish with time. As long as there are Indian students who need special help in school, there will be a role for an Indian Advocate. Indian Youth Advocacy at its best is a powerful force toward the improvement of a school's efforts to educate Indian youth.

C. Parents of Indian Students

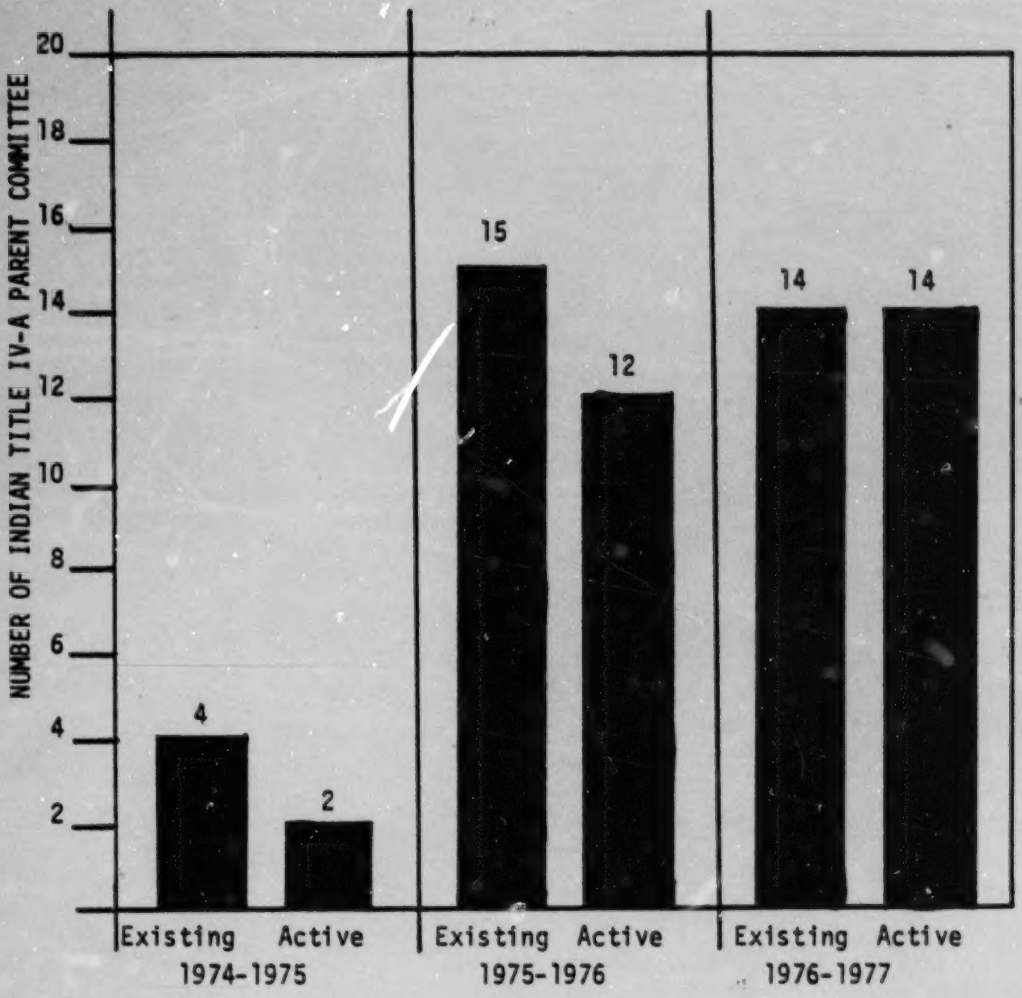
Very often the feelings that an Indian young person has for school are directly related to the feelings his parents have for the school. Schools have a tendency to become a rather frightening unknown to parents who may have had conflicts with teachers or other school personnel in their background or who may not have graduated themselves. Getting Indian parents involved with the school district in a positive way is one of the main concerns of the advocates. The Title IV-A parent committees provided a unique way in which parents could become actively and positively involved with their children's education. Table 10 is an indication of the change in parental involvement through the Title IV-A parent committee: The average number of parents on a committee is 8, each of whom represent at least 6 other Indian parents of the community.

The advocate's role pertaining to parent committee has been many faceted. They were originally responsible for the organization of committees not previously operating. With this organization process came the necessity of providing parents with information and training in serveral areas. Following is a list of the Training sessions provided by COSEP to Indian Parents:

Training Sessions:

Fall 1975	Basic Parent Committee Information for Title IV-A	15 Parent Committees-4 Sessions
Fall 1976	Title IV-A Budget and Record-keeping Workshop	Eveleth 14 Parent Committees 1 Session
Winter 1976	Title IV-A Proposal Writing Workshop	14 Parent Committes-2 Sessions

Table 10



TITLE IV-A PARENT COMMITTEE

These training sessions only represent a minute part of all the information and assistance provided to parents by the Indian Youth Advocate or Indian Youth Resource Person. Advocates have recruited and accompanied parents to various other training sessions sponsored by other agencies, as well.

Each parent committee meets an average of once a month and the advocates attend nearly every parent committee meeting. This can be a lot of meetings for an advocate that represents several school districts. Fortunately, this past school year, 1976-1977, has seen many of the parent committees begin to develop a sense of unity and purpose. With these feelings they can operate independently of the advocate and have become a strong influence in several school districts.

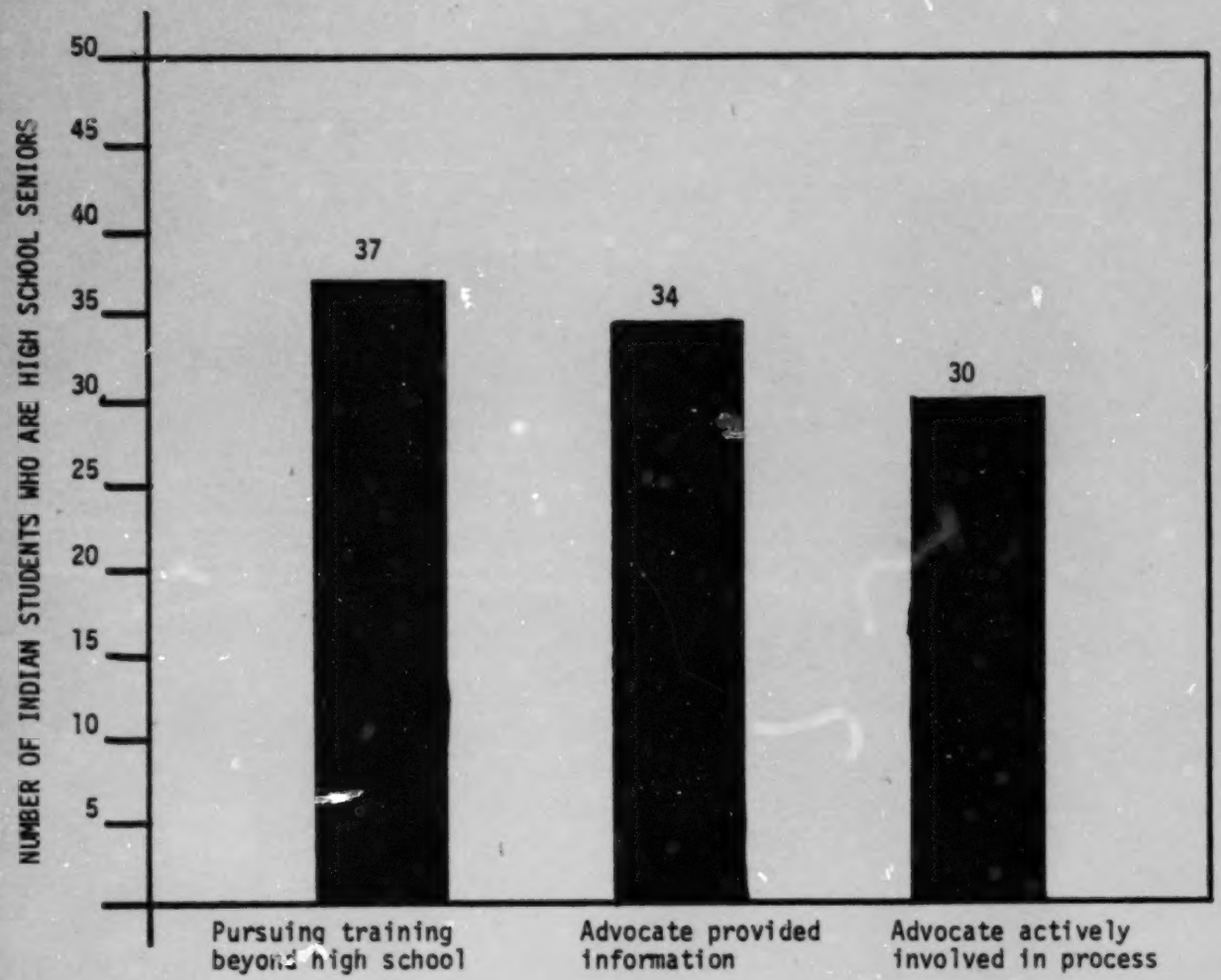
D. Dissemination of Information

Concurrent with the other needs of many Indian students is the necessity to find sources of aid to be used in pursuing training beyond high school. Such aids do exist, but unfortunately, many Indian families are not aware of the existance of many of these financial aids. The advocates have made it their business to become aware of what financial aid exists and how to apply for it. Table 11 illustrates the involvement of the advocates with Indian high school seniors who will be pursuing some form of training beyond high school.

When an advocate is actively involved in the process of a student pursuing some form of higher education, he/she is helping fill out admittance and financial aid papers, making contacts for the student, and possibly taking the student to visit a college or vocational school.

The process of dissemination of post-secondary information and aids to Indian students and their parents is another one of the many roles of

Table 11



INDIAN STUDENTS WHO ARE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

the advocate that is continuous. This role has a subtle importance that is not measurable; perhaps the assistance by an advocate with the dirty work of "papers" may have made the differences in the decisions by Indian young persons to pursue some form of higher education.

III. Selected Anecdotes

One way to bring all of the preceding factual information into perspective is by an exposure to the actual experiences of the Indian Youth Advocates or Indian Youth Resource People. Each of these people is unique and each brings some of his own personality to the job. However, all have a commitment to serving Indian students through educational systems.

Following are four anecdotes compiled from the work of the advocates this past year. These brief encounters with personal experiences help present the flavor of the role of advocate and the COSEP project as a whole.

A. Student Advocacy: A Drop-Out Problem

I became involved in helping a seventeen year old male student, grade 11, who had left the home of his foster parents due to family disputes, and was living temporarily with his girlfriend's parents. After missing a good deal of school, he finally dropped out. I had talked with him prior to this, about his irregular attendance, since his grades were also suffering. I had also helped him verify his enrollment with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and we had discovered that he was an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippew Tribe, the Leech Lake Reservation.

After he dropped from school, I went to talk with him and he decided to return to school. Unfortunately, the school was reluctant to have him return, due to his prior attendance, his grades, and his school problems. I met with the assistant principal and the school counselor, and we discussed alternatives for him. Finally it was decided that he should be allowed to return to school, with restrictions regarding his attendance.

I found a tutor to help him catch up with his school work.

This student was also on probation at the time, and soon was arrested with a possession charge. I supported him by going to court with him and by preparing him for his court appearance. He was released to a young clergyman, as there wasn't enough proof to convict him. He was not in school at this point, though, and stole the clergyman's car. Charges could have been pressed against him again, but the clergyman decided instead to send him to Duluth to live with his mother, with the restriction that if he became involved in any more trouble, charges would be pressed.

In March the student returned to our community and moved in with his foster parents. Prior to his leaving, he and I had discussed at length what he would do with his life. He was very mixed up at this point, but felt that he would like to try a vocational school in the fall of 1977. I showed him materials from various AVTI's, and he decided to try Bemidji AVTI.

I then made an appointment with a minority recruiter and with a financial aid officer of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, and arranged for them to meet with us at the office of the director of the AVTI. After obtaining the necessary enrollment and financial aid papers, which I helped him fill out and send, we arranged a financial packet for him. I also helped him obtain a job for the summer months through CETA, and will monitor his progress until fall, when he enters Bemidji AVTI.

B. Role of the Student Advocate: Perspective One

I recall one day that was particularly full for me. I began the day by sending mailings to all members of the parent committee. At 9:00

a student stopped by my desk and we went over her financial aid application while discussing her plans to attend vocational school. I made arrangements to help her find housing. As soon as she left, I hurried for my appointment at the senior high school. Five Indian students were planning to visit Bemidji State University that evening, to attend a pow wow, and we needed to finalize the transportation. After this short meeting, the high school counselor asked me into his office, and we discussed what we could do to help one particular student who was having some health problems, as well as emotional conflicts with family.

Right after lunch I made a home visit and discussed with a mother how her son was doing in an English extension course from the University of Minnesota. He needed this course in order to graduate on time, and I was please to hear he was doing well.

Immediately after this I picked up the students who would be visiting Bemidji State University that evening, and drove to Bemidji. The pow wow ran late, and we did not return until nearly midnight. A full and rewarding day had finally come to an end.

C. Role of the Student Advocate: Perspective Two

While no day is a typical day, when working as an Indian Youth Advocate, I find certain activities more common than others. Basically, most of my time is spent in four major ways:

1. Parent support and parent committee work.
2. Support and assistance for Indian students with school problems.
3. Title IV project implementation.
4. COSEP staff activities.

A morning might include phone calls to finalize a parent committee meeting and a conference with the junior high counselor about a student who has been skipping. Then I might line up a session with the student or arrange a home visit. I find I must ride a thin line, trying to be useful and productive in the eyes of regular school staff, but at the same time avoiding the role of truant officer. Occassionally, while I am in my office, a student might stop by to talk. Sometimes it may be because of a problem or incident, and sometimes it may be just to visit.

My afternoons are often spent out of the office, either in the school buildings or visiting homes. Most contacts I have with students who have dropped out are made through home visits at a time when I am not an inconvenience to have around.

Each parent committee that I help has monthly meetings. This means at least three evening meetings each month. Also, I have occassionally attended a school board meeting. Oftentimes I become aware of a developing conflict or problem for a student at these meetings, and may leave with a new list of contacts to make for the next day.

I may also find myself making arrangements for a field trip that a parent committee has planned, or arranging to take a student to a college or vocational school for a tour and a talk with the admissions counselor. Occasionally I may even become involved with financial aid arrangements, or housing and transportation problems, for a student going on to higher education.

The work is filled with variety, which makes it both interesting and difficult. But I feel I fill a useful role, and can help Indian students through school successfully. That is really why I like my work.

D. Student Advocacy: A Special Education Problem

The place to start is when I met the Olson family. That sounds like a relatively easy thing to do, but both Mr. and Mrs. Olson work until late, Monday through Thursday, but are home earlier on Friday afternoons. After a month of trying, we finally got together. I liked the Olson family immediately! A visit to their home on Friday got to be part of my schedule, a part that I looked forward to.

As the family and I got to know each other and developed some mutual trust, we began to discuss problems that their children were having in school. More than one child was having difficulty, but the most serious was a 12 year old daughter, who I will call Janice. Janice's mother expressed a concern that Janice seemed to be forgetful, and was having problems in school because of this. I then talked with her principal, and she voiced the same concern. A conference with the principal, Janice's teacher, and the mother was arranged. It seemed to help Mrs. Olson when I arranged the conference, told her what was going to be discussed, and said that I would go with her.

The conference revealed the same concern: Janice could not remember, and she could not comprehend much of her math problems. We then talked about what the school had to offer Janice, which at that point was limited. Something unexpected came from that conference, however. As we were leaving, Mrs. Olson asked a question about a child being convulsive as a baby, and if it would have any effect on her now. None of us knew the answer, but decided it was worth checking into. We then consulted the school nurse, who then sent us to the family's regular doctor.

After that we started checking with the special education director for the district, to see what steps we should take to have a pediatric evaluation

of Janice, and what could be done if the evaluation should turn out as we half expected it might. The director of special education was most helpful and gave us some direction. Then we started writing letters. We had to get the help of county Social Services. Also, the school nurse was quite involved, since she made an appointment for Janice at the Mayo Clinic.

The trip to Rochester and the Mayo Clinic was quite an experience. I made the trip with the Olson family mainly for support, but it was a real learning experience for me. I saw the Olson family in another perspective. Janice was a real trouper! She did all that was asked of her, without complaint. After the tests, we found out exactly what we thought we would. Janice would need special education help, through the school. But now we had ammunition to get her that help. We had documented proof.

With all the documents and the test results, we went back to the school and to the director of special education to try to set up a program geared to Janice's particular needs. The school did not have the facilities to meet those needs, so through the director of special education, a program for Janice was set up in a neighboring school.

It is now the end of Janice's school year at the second school, and we will soon be having another conference to see if we can set up a program for her in junior high school, back in her home district, for next year.

As I write this, it seems like it took alot of effort and time, but that many people could have done the same job. It took months of writing letters, making appointments, and meeting with this agency or that agency. Ultimately a large number of people were involved. The principal of the school, Janice's teacher, the school nurse, family doctors, the county

Social Services, the special education personnel, Mayo Clinic doctors and technicians, and the principal and teachers of the second school district all played important parts. One principal remarked that none of these individuals had the time to put into such an effort, and it was fortunate to have an Indian Advocate whose responsibilities included this. It makes me wonder,though, how many other children are going without appropriate services, just because of lack of time to get involved.

IV. Summary:

The fact that Indian students have special learning needs that are not being successfully met has been evident to people in many areas of education. The fact that there are many Indian young people of school age, out of school who are in need of special services has also been evident. The project has made and is continuing to make an attempt to meet some of these needs through the position of Indian Youth Advocates and Indian Youth Resource People in Northeastern Minnesota.

These people have been actively involved in their individual school districts through the departments of special education or the school administration. They have become acquainted with Indian students and their families in order to serve as a liaison between these Indian families and the school. They have identified Indian students who are receiving special services and have attempted to determine with the help of trained professionals in the school district and auxilliary to the school district, if these services were appropriate or adequate. The Advocates have been instrumental in making schools aware of Indian students who are not receiving any special educational services, but who were determined to be in need of them.

Finding Alternatives for out-of-school Indian young people is an important function of the Indian Youth Advocate. The Advocates are involved in taking these young people to colleges and vocational schools, filling out forms, and helping to make appointments for G.E.D. exams. At times they set up and attend staffings in an attempt to facilitate a student's re-entry into high school. Once an out of school youth is identified, an attempt is made to determine if he/she wishes to go back to school, or if there is another alternative that could be pursued.

The attitude of an Indian parent is very important in the formation of a students' attitudes toward school. The advocates are continuously working to keep both of these attitudes positive. Parents have become involved in their schools through Title IV-A programs and through the efforts of the advocate to draw these Indian parents into staffings, conferences and any other school functions.

Through all of these duties and responsibilities runs the thread of positive Indian identity. Indian students who are having difficulties, Indian students who are succeeding very well in school, out-of-school Indian youth and parents of Indian young people all have a person within the school system with whom they can relate. In addition, this person, the Indian Advocate or Resource Person, is an Indian person who can represent the school in a positive way to Indian students and parents. The positive liaison in both directions can only help to eliminate misconceptions on both sides and work toward a much more productive relationship between the school districts and their Indian communities. The end results are better educational opportunities for Indian youth.

Appendix 1

*Budgets

COSEP Funding Source	Feb.-June FY 75	FY 76	FY 77	Totals
CETA	$16,500	$10,500	$ 7,000	$34,000
Title I	$18,000	$18,000	$18,000	$54,000
Special Ed. Reimbursement		$ 6,500	$30,000	$36,500
Special Education Title VI-B		$43,000	$31,000	$74,000
Approx. Totals	$34,500	$78,000	$86,000	$198,500

Locally Supervised Native American Resource Persons				
Special Ed. Reimbursement			$20,000	$20,000
Local Title IV-A			$15,000	$15,000
Local School District			$ 1,500	$ 1,500
Approx. Totals			$36,500	$36,500

*By Funding Source. Figures are approximations.

Appendix 2

COSEP AREA NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH RESOURCE PERSONS

and

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Appendix 3

JOB DESCRIPTION

Position: Program Manager

Position Purpose: 1) To supervise Indian Youth Advocates in serving Indian students. To consult and advise with school district sponsored Indian Youth Resource People.

2) To promote on-going advocacy for Indian students.

3) To establish contact with COSEP area schools, and maintain credibility with them.

4) To encourage the development of parent committees, and assist the advocates in effective support of the parent committees.

5) To service as a consultant to the Indian Youth Advocates and Indian Youth Resource People concerning proposal writing, existing educational services and availability of other needed resources. Provide technical assistance in all of these areas.

6) To plan, monitor, and direct all program budget operations.

Responsibilities:

1) Provide basic program direction for advocates.

2) Consult regularly with advocates on an individual basis.

3) Orgainize staff meetings.

4) Plan and implement training for advocates and Indian parent committees for Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act.

5) Gather, coordinate, and disseminate information on special learning needs of Indian students in the project area.

6) Plan, monitor and direct COSEP budget. Prepare and submit all financial reports required by the funding sources.

7) Prepare and submit periodic financial and program reports to the Nett Lake School Board.

8) Maintain contact with Minnesota State Special Education Department, Title I, Title VI, and Indian Education Sections; Minnesota Chippewa Tribe; Northern Region Advisory Service; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; and other agencies serving Indian students. Provide liaison between these agencies and the advocates.

Appendix 3

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position: Native American Youth Advocate

Position Purpose:

1) To advocate for Indian students on the basis of their individual learning needs.

2) To stimulate action toward the development of services for Indian students, to fulfill their unmet needs.

3) To establish and maintain contact with Indian school age youth, whether attending school or not, their parents and school personnel. To function as a liaison between these groups.

4) To encourage the development and assist in the effective operation of a parent committee for Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act.

Responsibilities:

1) Identify Indian youth attending school and advocate for appropriate services. This shall include arrangements for: special education evaluations; staffings; supplementary services; enrichment and motivational activities, modified regular school programs; counselling; work experience. Arrangements must always be made with the best interest of the student foremost.

2) Identify all school age Indian youth who are not attending school and have not graduated, and advocate for appropriate services for them. This shall include arrangements for: modified programs within the school, programs

extended from the school, special tutoring, work experience, counselling, Adult Basic Education, higher education, re-enrollment in school, or vocational training. Arrangements must be made with the wishes and best interests of the student foremost.

3) Make regular home visits to Indian families, with particular attention to families of students receiving special services.

4) Attend Title IV-A parent committee meetings and assist in the implementation of Title IV-A programs. Assist the parent committee officers in completing regular reports or specially designated tasks. Assist parent committee chairperson in organizing regular and special meetings.

5) Keep parent committee informed of pertinent information concerning Title IV-A. Keep parent committee informed of matters of concern within the school district. Keep school district personnel informed of parent committee activities.

6) Assist in writing Title IV-A proposals.

7) Encourage the development of special Indian culture-related activities, tutoring programs, summer programs, or any other education service that will benefit Indian students and their parents. Encourage the Indian community to participate in these events.

8) Attend my school board meetings in which issues of potential interest or concern to the Indian community may be presented. Request time on the school board agenda at regular intervals to present reports and keep members informed of progress and developments in the Indian Education programs.

9) Establish ongoing contact with teachers of Indian students. Assist teachers in locating Indian related curriculum materials and/or resource persons.

10) Participate in appropriate in-service training offered by the COSEP project, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, The State Department of Education, or other educational programs.

Appendix 4

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Appendix 5

MAP OF COSEP AREA